

Living the Spirit Jesus, the Son, Became Man

As we continue to search out the answer to our question “Who God is,” we come to a reflection on Jesus, as both God and man. In our previous insert we wrote about the Son of God with an obvious emphasis on his divinity as the Second Person of the Trinity. When we search out Revelation we will find sufficient proof that Jesus is this Son of God. Jesus tells us in the Scriptures: “The Father and I are one. Before Abraham was made, I am.” He reveals that he is “the Way, the Truth and the Life.” The Father speaks at his Baptism saying, “This is My beloved Son.”

St. Peter tells us that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” St. Paul again and again writes of the divinity of Jesus. He tells that Jesus “is before all and through him all things were made.” (Col 1,17) John the Baptist tells us to “Behold the Lamb of God.”

Our faith is based on the constant teachings of the Church. In the study of revealed truth the Church has developed a theology that is complex and diverse. One thing we know is that Jesus is God. But we also know that he became man and is our Savior.

The full understanding who Jesus is took time to be expressed in clear theological terms. The early Councils provide us with the Tradition that sustains our faith to this day. It was no easy task because there were among Christians misconceptions of how Jesus is both God and man. You may have heard about such as the Nestorians, the Arians and the Monophysites. Again, we take so much for granted that we really do not think much at all about these early heresies or mistakes.

What we do know and what we believe is found in the Creed we recite at every Sunday liturgy. “I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, ...begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father, through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man.”

Long before Isaiah had prophesied: “A virgin shall be with child and bear a son and his name shall be called Emmanuel [God with us].... A Child is born to us, a Son is given to usGod himself will come and save you.” These texts confirm our faith that Jesus is true God and true man. He is but one Person with two natures, divine and human.

It is not my purpose here in these inserts to write a life of Jesus. As I said before, this has been done in admirable ways by many. What I personally think about all this is that we do best to read the Gospels [and the rest of the New Testament] and make them a source for our faith before all else. I often wonder how anyone reading them with faith can fail to fall in love with Jesus.

There in the Gospels we find Jesus telling us about himself. Yes, he reveals his divinity. He also reveals what perfect humanity is. He is the One Perfect Man (human being) who is of himself like us in all things but sin. [I said “of himself,” because we know that Mary was conceived free of original sin and remained sinless throughout her life. This happened by the power and grace of God.]

Jesus refers to himself with many analogies or images. He is the Vine – the source of grace and life. He is the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep. He is the Living Bread of Life. Others tell us of him. John the Baptist cries out at the start of the mission of Jesus: He is the Lamb of God. Paul writes of him: that he is the “one Mediator of God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.” He adds, lest we forget, that Jesus “is the Head of the Body, the Church.”

The humanity of Jesus is revealed throughout the Gospels. We may mention here how in his human compassion he used his divine power in his miracles. I think, too, of how he wept at the tomb of Lazarus and over his beloved Jerusalem. Who of us can doubt his humanity as we read of his ordeal in Gethsemane and in his passion and death?

Many of our meditations on Jesus can be, however, far too intellectual and lead us only a little on our way to spiritual growth. We must do more than study about Jesus. We must embrace Him. We must make ourselves open to his ever-present power. It is the power of nothing less than love. It is a love which is a sharing of the life of God.

In this Year of Faith we would do well to take some time to unite ourselves with Jesus. I am sure we can accomplish this union by what we come to learn about him. But we must be open to that embrace of which I just wrote. It is not in my power to describe how each of you will come to this relationship with Jesus. There are so many ways that he gives himself to us through love.

There is, of course, one special way for faithful Catholics to unite themselves with Jesus in an intimate way. That is through the Eucharist. Jesus comes to us and is really present to us in this great Sacrament. We can come to him with all our being – with our joys and our sorrows; with our thoughts and our words; with our hidden hopes and our very human attempts to love him. One thing is sure: he does come to us. He keeps the promise he made before his Ascension that he would remain with us always. What we let Him do is our affair. It all begins, of course, with faith.

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As I write this I wonder how to express my own relationship with Jesus. As with all such intimate loves, there will always be something hidden, something silent, something that evades being put into words for others. As I reflect on this, I think how my experience is hardly unique. My knowing about Jesus and knowing Him has changed many times over a lifetime.

As a child I knew him as God, but did not know much about God at all. [Is this not true for you?] I soon enough learned in a very simple way that Jesus is in the Blessed Sacrament. In my Holy Communion I was taught a formal way to pray – to use that precious time to thank him, to be contrite, to ask and to adore and love. Soon I found there was a bit more to that. There are times when one keeps silent and just enjoys the presence of a loving Friend.

Of course, I must see in Jesus all those things that mark for me what a priest must be and do. He is without doubt the great High Priest. I often meditate on Jesus as the Sacrifice, the Victim and the Priest. No priest can escape this reality. It comes as some would say “with the territory.” So much about me.

I hope, dear reader, that you may find a way to meditate in this Year of Faith on how you are called to know about and really know this wonderful Friend. His name is Jesus!

God love you always!

Monsignor David Morrison.

“Lord teach us to pray.”

Yes, Lord Jesus, train us in this special knowledge, the only one necessary, the only one within reach of all, the only one that will cross the bounds of time to follow you into the house of your Father, when we, too, “shall be like him for we shall see him as he is.” Teach us, Lord, this divine science; that is enough for us.

(Blessed Pope John Paul II, November 24, 1984)